I: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

have been born to him, his wife and children live with him. It 573
is he who faces the dangers of the jungles, and risks his life for 604
wife and children. In his wife's clan he occupies a very high place, he is second to none but u *kni*, the maternal uncle, while in his own family circle a father and husband is nearer to his children and his wife than u *kni*. The Khasi saying is, "u *kpa* ate *kah ban ioi*, u *kni* ate *tang ha ka iap ka im*," which may be translated freely as, "the father bears the heat and burden of the day, the maternal uncle only comes when it is a question of life or death." The Khasi father is revered not only when living, but also after death as *U Thaciang*, and special ceremonies are performed to propitiate his shade. Further remarks on the subject of marriage will be found in the Section which deals with religion.

DIVORCE.

Divorce amongst the Khasis is common, and may occur for 586
a variety of reasons, such as adultery, barrenness, incompatibility of temperament, &c. The rule amongst the Khasis is that both parties must agree, but amongst the Wars, especially the people of Shella, the party who divorces the other without his or her consent must pay compensation, which is called *ka ngarain, or ka thoem*. Amongst the Khasis it is not the custom to enforce restitution of conjugal rights; as a rule, when husband and wife cannot live together amicably, they agree to divorce one another; but occasionally it happens that either the husband or the wife will not agree to a divorce. Usually the husband would be willing to live with his wife; but when the latter consents neither to live with her husband nor to accept a divorce, a difficult situation arises, and it is in the event of such a contingency happening that the necessity of assessing *ka ngarain, or ka thoem* (compensation), occurs. [587]
The latter is conducted by the village elders. Parties who have been divorced cannot afterwards remarry one another, but they are at liberty to marry into other families. A woman cannot [588]
be divorced during pregnancy. The following description of the divorce ceremony is taken from U Jaclem Roy's note on the

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

Khasi religion. If the marriage has been celebrated according to the *pynkiar synjat* rite, a *kniang* (go-between) is necessary on each side, also the *kni*, or maternal uncles of the parties, to witness the divorce. In other cases the presence of the *kniang* is unnecessary, but some acquaintances and friends as well as the relatives on both sides should witness the ceremony. The husband and the wife each bring five cowries (*sbài*), or, more commonly nowadays, five pice. The wife gives her five cowries or pice to her husband, who places them with his, and then returns the five cowries or coins to his wife, together with his own five. The wife then returns the ten shells or coins to the husband who throws them on the ground. A crier (*u nông pyrta shnong*) then goes round the village to proclaim the divorce, using the following words:—

"Kaw—hear, oh villagers, that U—— and K—— have become separated in the presence of the elders. Hei! thou, oh, young man, canst go and make love to Ka—— for she is now unmarried (*khynraw*), and thou, oh, spinster, canst make love to U——. Hei! there is no let or hindrance from henceforth." Among the Khasis divorce must be by mutual consent, and the ceremony must take place in the open air. Until the divorce ceremony has been performed as above described, neither husband nor wife can marry again, but after it has taken place, either can remarry, but not within the family of the divorced husband or wife. In the event of a husband or wife being absent for a long period, say ten years, without any communication having been received from either of them, a divorce ceremony is performed by the relatives on his or her behalf. It is stated by U Jeebon Roy* that the rule of monogamy is not so strict for the husband as it is for the wife, he can contract an informal alliance with another woman, the only prohibition being that she must not belong to the original wife's village. Such a wife is called *ka tynga tuh*, literally, stolen wife, in contradistinction to the legally married wife (*ka tynga tiei*). The children by the unmarried wife are called *ki khun khlur* (children from the top). By children from the top is understood to mean children from the branches not from the root (*trai*) of the tree. Such children cannot claim ancestral property except in the last contingency.

* See page 18, "Ka Niam Khasi." (U Jeebon Roy.)

1: Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

ancestral property, except in the Wár country. In the event of a divorce the mother is always allowed the custody of the children. Divorces amongst both Khasis and Syntengs are of common occurrence, the result being that the children in many cases are ignorant of even the names of their fathers. For the mother, on the other hand, the children cherish a very strong affection, all their sympathies and affections binding them closely to the mother's kin. Divorce amongst the Syntengs, though resting on the same principle as that of the Khasis, differs in detail, and must be described separately. It is as follows:—In the first place it is not necessary for both husband and wife to be consenting parties, as is the case with the Khasis. In the Nongkhlih doloiship divorce takes place before the relatives of the parties. The man has to give eight annas as a sign of the divorce, and clothes worth Rs. 3/- or Rs. 5/- to the wife. There is a similar custom in the Suhtnga and Amwi doloiships. In the Jowai doloiship the divorce takes place in the presence of a village official called *U basan*. The husband or the wife gives the *basan* an eight anna piece, the latter gives this either to the wife or to the husband, as the case may be. The *basan's* share of the eight annas is two pice, the remainder being spent on liquor. The *basan* is entitled to a further fee of one anna from the man. If a wife does not agree to accept divorce, she is entitled to receive two pieces of cloth from the husband to the value of Rs. 3/-. This compensation is called *thnem*. The divorce then takes place. If a wife wishes to divorce her husband, and the latter is unwilling, before she can obtain divorce, she must pay *thnem* to the value of the whole amount the husband has spent on her and her children during the marriage. Divorce customs in Nartiang and Nongjinghi doloiships are much the same, only the amounts tendered by the parties and that of compensation differing.

In conclusion it should be stated that the great drawback attaching to divorce in ordinary communities, i.e. the effect that it has on the lives of the children of the marriage, does not apply to the Khasis, for with them the children always live with their mother and their mother's family, which latter would be bound to maintain them in the event of a divorce.

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

child is a female. Up to the present time I have not discovered any trace of the *couvade*. [546]

6. *Marriage ceremony.*—Marriage is a purely civil contract. The most prominent features of the Khasi marriage are the following :— [581] 585

(*a*) The *pynhiar synjat*, or betrothal.

(*b*) The pouring out of libations of liquor to *Ka Iawbei* (the first maternal ancestress).

(*c*) The eating by bride and bridegroom out of the same plate.

(*d*) The mixing of liquor by the *ksiangs*, or go-betweens.

(*e*) The taking of the bride to the house of mother of the bridegroom, where a ring is placed on her finger by her mother-in-law.

7. *Divorce* can be easily obtained amongst the Khasis. Adultery, want of issue, and incompatibility of temper, are some of the more frequent causes. The usual ceremony of divorce is as follows:—The husband hands the wife five cowries, or pice. The wife hands these back to the husband, with five of her own. The man then either throws them away or hands them over to some village elder, who throws them away. Divorce is then complete. 586

8. *Death, ceremonies.*—The corpse is bathed and laid on its back. A fowl's egg (*ka'lengkypoh*) is then placed on the navel. A cock (*ka' iarkrad lynti*=the fowl that scratches the way) is sacrificed. The limbs of the fowl and its feathers are placed in a bamboo basket, which is hung up near the head of the corpse. Rich people sacrifice a cow also, called *ka masi pynsum*. When a cow is sacrificed it is shot through the heart with an arrow. From the time of bathing the body till it is burned, offerings are offered daily; these offerings are called *ai ja miet ja step*. It is the custom amongst some to place the corpse in a long narrow box or coffin, which has been hollowed out of the trunk of a tree; this is called *ka shyngoid*. When this procedure is adopted, a small pig, which is killed by a spear (*u narsuh*) is sacrificed. This sacrifice takes place during the night. A goat (*U lang sait ksuid*=a goat to wash the devil)—which is believed to be a scapegoat to bear the sins of the deceased—is sacrificed. The corpse is then taken outside and placed on a bamboo bier (*ka krong*). When the *shyngoid* is used it is placed inside the bier. Some rice is scattered on the ground, and water is poured from a *lhota*. On arrival at the burning-place, the bier, with the corpse in it, is placed on the pyre, or *jingthang*. The egg placed on the navel is then broken on a plank and a fowl (*Ka iar padat*) is sacrificed. Two arrows are shot, one to the east and another to the west (this is a Khasi custom only); the arrows are intended for the protection of the spirit on its way to another world. Fire is then applied to the pyre. 764

lk Chattopadhyay E-4, 5 (no date) 1941 AR7 Khasi AR7

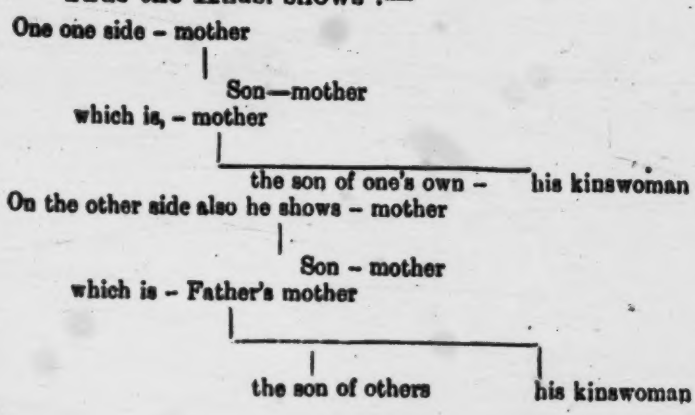
removal of the bar on remarriage was also of the same kind elsewhere in the neighbouring States. Clearly, the idea of leviration or sororation is incompatible with this idea of the marriage bond continuing even after death and necessitating a ceremony to break it. It may also be noted that while the Khasis permit divorce somewhat easily, remarriage is not permitted of either party "within the family of the divorced husband or wife" (G). A Khasi cannot also marry two sisters, although he can marry irregularly, more than one woman and also the wife's sister after the decease of the wife. We can now discuss why a woman or a man refers to the brothers and sisters of the husband or wife by the kinship terms used by the spouse, qualified by a special term. When a man marries and goes to live in the house of his wife's mother, he comes in contact with unmarried sisters of the wife. But he knows that they are sexually to be avoided. He lives in the wife's mother's house only during the life time of his wife. A wife's sister is comparable to a Kur sister sexually, during this period.

But his economic relations and religious ties require that a distinction should be made between these "sisters" and the "Kur sisters." The qualifying term supplies this requirement. The woman, on the other hand, has no direct relations with her husband's brothers. She has however to keep in touch with the husband's female relatives. The bones of the husband go over to the mother's house and eventually to the clan ossuary. The husband is also a potential manager of the property of his female relatives. She has therefore to take note of the order in age of her husband's sisters. As her husband uses the terms for sisters for the sisters-in-law, it is quite natural for her to extend such usage to her husband's sisters. The brothers of the husband do not count at all so far as the woman is concerned, and she will not therefore have any special term for them. As the sisters are referred to as Para Kynsi and Hymmen Kynsi, so will the brothers of the husband be referred to by similar terms. The absence of any sexual privileges between the woman and her

14: Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

human beings all over the four quarters of the globe (*ehi snieh ka pyrthei*) with whom, in the world, he can give in marriage and take in marriage, shows the nature which is believed to be innate in the Khasi, and his supposed power of moulding the world. His nature is to grow and to resist, to extend and spread out. It is against his idea of life to remain narrow or limited and resourceless. He is not to be made small or made an orphan, it will not do for him and his idea of the world to '*sah khlem khun kelem kti*,' stay without kind and species, without child, without issue. A couple would even seek to separate if there are no children of the union. His idea is, so to say, 'imperialistic,' to sow and spread out. As I wrote elsewhere, "A Khasi marries men and women of all races; to his Khasi parent the issues are all one and the same without any distinction of caste or creed or colour or possessions. The children are the 'khun kha' (*khun* = child, *kha* = born, i.e. children who are born through the union of a descendant of the parent with a descendant of another parent), and these children are unified into families and are assimilated, in the Khasi idea of life, while these groups of families are traced to their mother and are made to revolve on this ancestress as the pivot of their existence."

Thus the Khasi shows :—


One one side – mother
Son—mother
which is, – mother
the son of one's own –
his kinswoman
On the other side also he shows – mother
Son – mother
which is – Father's mother
the son of others
his kinswoman

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

always somewhat outside the family conversation which was centred on the maternal uncle and his sisters, nephews and nieces, by whom I was well taken care of. This is somewhat similar to the situation amongst the Cewa and the Yao of the Central Bantus, which have what Richard calls 'the detachable husband' (Richards, 1950, pp. 233-35, 248), though the parallel is not by any means exact.

There is, therefore, inevitably an element of tension in the relations between the wife's maternal uncle (including parents-in-law) and the husband (son-in-law) and this tension makes the latter's life extremely uncomfortable. This awkward position is well shown in the divorce rate. At Kongton (see List 9), out of 61 couples (house-owners and their spouses), the number of persons who had experience of divorce was 33 (female 15, male 18) and those married more than twice numbered 19 (female 7, male 12). Out of 61 couples, there were only 31 in which neither husband nor wife had been divorced. In my census of Jatinga village, 70 per cent of all divorce cases were marriages to heiresses. In general, the period when divorce occurs more frequently is before a couple get children and after the wife has passed the child-bearing age. A marriage breaks up either through the action of the wife or of the husband, but generally through that of the wife. However, the state of separation which I presently describe is brought about by the husband, though later it results in a divorce from the wife. Divorce does not mean a great catastrophe for a Khasi wife, especially if she is an heiress and her husband's economic contribution is not significant. Moreover, in this society remarriage is as easy for a widow or divorcée, as it is to divorce. In the villages of Sohkynduh and Kongton, the couple who wants to divorce has only to throw a few Annas together in the presence of some witness, usually an elderly man.

In addition to divorce, there are many actual separations of husband and wife, of short or long duration, when the husband runs away from his wife's house to his sister's. Though it does not always end in divorce, considerable number of husbands have a strong tendency to spend most of their time at their sister's house. Khasi women often told me, "I don't know why he does not come back to my place." I have often found the husband staying at his sister's house only a few houses away from his wife's, without any particular reason. They are obliged to see each other every day whether divorced or separated. This kind of ambiguity in the marriage relation seems to have an important correlation with the Khasi social structure, combined with the village endogamy. The man and and wife have grown up together from their childhood in the same village and known each other very well. Hence their psychology cannot clearly distinguish the marriage form as a newly-established independent social relation-

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

171 592 602 613 428 seems to come *firstly* from the different residential arrangement on marriage: among the Negri Sembilan a man marries into his wife's group, i.e. his wife's village; being thus separated from his kin, and as a result of the physical absence of his wife's brother or maternal uncle in his domestic family, he enjoys considerable rights in his wife's household—as Swift states, he is 'master in his own house.' On the other hand, since among the Khasi the man stays in the village where his mother's (or mother's successor's) house is, even after his marriage, his relation to his natal house is preserved; *secondly*, from the structural difference of organization of the descent group. Among the Khasi, the *iing* is always the centre of the descent group, based on unigeniture succession and inheritance. Hence, the core of the descent group is always found physically in a particular household, whereas among the Negri Sembilan, the descent group is *not* organized on a *household* level, but is a much wider organization, including apparently many households. Membership of an actual household and of a descent group are at different levels. To marry out and become a member of his wife's household means for the man the transfer of his household membership. Likewise, his sister's husband becomes a member of his sister's household. Thereby he becomes a secondary member of his sister's household after marriage though he keeps his memberhsip in the descent group to which his sister belongs. Among the Khasi, membership of a descent group always corresponds to membership of a particular household. The Khasi man can always demand his rights at his natal house primarily, as he is a member of that descent group. But it should be noted that he has this right only in his mother's (or mother's successor's) household, not his other sisters' (non-heiress') and mother's sisters' households (unless one of them is successor of his mother), though they may belong to the same descent group. These matri kin's households are considered as separate *iing* (strict functional descent group) from his.

• 586 613 736 428 Indeed, sometimes a man cannot find his *iing*, because his mother died leaving no daughter to succeed her, or his sister died leaving no successor, and his *iing* became extinct. Such a case occasionally happens when a man becomes a divorcé or a widower as he is getting old. Then he has to face a serious social and economic condition. In divorcing, he has to leave everything he owned, his earnings including the house which he built, and even children . . . really he has nothing left him except his body.[1] Such a wretched man collects some timber and makes a small hut for himself, though sometimes lads who sympathize with him help him to build it. Unless he finds some woman

1. A widower has an alternative solution—to remain in his late wife's household till he marries again, though his position is not comfortable there.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

whom he can marry, he has to endure this miserable lonely life, while often in the same village his former wife is living in a well-built house with her children and her matrilineal relatives as before. Households of 3, 13 and 30 of Sohkynduh in List 6, and 23, 29, 38 and 56 of Kongton in List 9 are instances of such cases. It is really a pitiful picture to see such a man, aged and poor, living all alone.

V. Marriage with the Non-heiress

Outsiders who come to the Khasi Hills are often impressed by the Khasi husband's miserable status and express surprise at the high divorce rate. This is mostly due to exaggeration based on the marriage with the heiress. However, where a man marries a non-heiress, there are many successful marriages with paternal authority. In most of these cases a man's status as a husband and as a father is stable. First of all, the domestic residential unit is an elementary family. From the onset of the marriage the husband's labour is of great importance to his family, since a non-heiress usually has no economic background, i.e., no dowry or inherited property (see p. 105). The economic circumstances allow a man to be the *de facto* head even though whatever he earns belongs, as a rule, to his wife. A man who succeeds at the beginning of his married life is respected and honoured as father in his family for the rest of his life. By this type of marriage, the man's status is firmly established. It is therefore a more secure form of marriage than a match with an heiress.

In such a marriage the children love and obey their father. The management of his acquired property will be taken over by his son and the property will be handed over to his daughter. Thus the paternal authority is as well established in this form of domestic family, as in a patrilineal family. However, the great difference from a patrilineal case is that the husband/father status is not permanent as the authority of the family. Theoretically he exercises it in the absence of a male adult member of his wife's *iing* (actually founded by his contribution), in other words, till his son is grown up (see p. 12). In the next generation this will form an established *iing* in which the husband of his youngest daughter will suffer again.

The household of this kind of marriage with a non-heiress actually enjoys a considerable degree of independence from the descent groups of both wife and husband. If a man who has established a matrimonial life independent of his wife's natal *iing*, is not the authority of his natal *iing*, his relation with the latter usually becomes weaker. Economic and residential factors make it possible for the men to make the considerable shift from his *iing* to his wife's *iing*, and though

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

182 Even after divorce or husband's death, the Khasi woman stays on in her
586 household. Indeed many divorced or widowed poor wives, whose
613 children are still small, try their best to live and bring up their children
736 by themselves without asking their brothers' help. Of course a mother and her small children may go back to live in her natal *iing*. Such cases are found particularly when the woman's *iing* is rich. However, during my field work, I found no sense of psychological inferiority in Khasi women, widows or divorcées, such as we usually find in other societies. The personality of the individual seems to reflect the social structure.

182 Given such strong residential independence on the part of the
184 non-heiress, economically divorced from her descent group, and
586 oriented towards sociological separation from it, the husband's eco-
593 nomic and social contribution is handsomely rewarded by the estab-
613 lishment of a stable, happier, matrimonial life. In fact, as already mentioned, the divorce rate among such couples is very low contrasted with the high rate among marriages with heiresses. More accurately, I should say that divorce is more likely to occur among the latter owing to the conflict of loyalties towards spouse and *iing*. Therefore, when each partner has less loyalty towards his or her natal *iing*, the divorce cases become correspondingly fewer. Thus, among the Khasi, successful marriages are frequently found where there is branching off from an *iing*. And a new *iing* is always established by a husband's contribution.

182 Khasi men, who are well aware of this fact, prefer to marry a
184 non-heiress, since they will then form an independent household and
581 remain immune to pressure from their wife's kin. However, they say a poor or lazy man prefers marriage with an heiress. As Richards said of the matrilineal Central Bantus, the residence on marriage seems to be a most important index of the husband's status, though the determining factors of the residence of the Khasi differ from those of the Bantus (see p. 124).

182 In the case of marriage with an heiress, when the wife dies, the
184 husband usually returns to his *iing* (the youngest sister's house). But
587 in marriage with a non-heiress the husband often remains with his
593 children, if his children are not too small and he is not planning to
613 marry any woman other than his late wife's younger sister. If he
736 marries his wife's younger sister, he has the right to stay on. This kind of sororal marriage cannot take place in the case of a man married to an heiress, since a Khasi man is not allowed to marry the late wife's elder sister. This form of sororate is found among the Khasi, but the levirate is unknown, such as can be seen among the Ashanti
182 and the Ila, where a man takes his late brother's wife. Among
587 the Khasi, even if a widow happened to marry her late husband's

says that the MoBrCh but not the FaSiCh is prohibited (1897: 2), but Gurdon says that the MoBrCh is eligible after the death of MoBr, and that FaSiCh is eligible after the death of Fa (1907: 78). Nowadays both types of marriage occur, whether the linking relative is living or dead. **Residence.** Residence is either duolocal or matrilocal under the roof of the wife's mother until the birth of one or two children. For a man married to a youngest daughter, it then continues to be matrilocal. For men married to other daughters, it becomes uxorilocal; there have also always been cases of virilocal residence, and it is now common to find neolocal residence in Shillong. For non-Christian Jaintias, it is duolocal throughout the marriage. **Domestic unit.** The domestic unit is the elementary family, though for a youngest daughter it may temporarily include also her aged mother, aged father, unmarried siblings, or divorced or widowed brothers. **Inheritance.** Traditionally, after the Khasi mother had helped each of her daughters to build and supply a house when each one married and had children, her only real obligation to help them economically was ended. Everything she possessed, excepting certain personalty that was destroyed in her cremation, was inherited by her youngest daughter. Failing daughters, a woman's property reverted to her next youngest sister's daughter. Today, this pattern is often modified by putting more property into the hands of older daughters and even sons. [Cf. Cantlie 1934; Becker 1924.] **Divorce.** A woman may effect numerous and usually brief separations from her husband by simply closing the door of her house to him, whereupon he returns to the house of his mother or youngest sister. Divorce, however, must be initiated by mutual consent. Divorce is very common, even though women resist it because they do not wish to lose a provider, and men because they do not wish to lose their children. Formerly it was accomplished by a simple ritual in the presence of witnesses, followed by public announcement by a town crier. Now, the witnesses and the public announcement have been dispensed with, and evidence for divorce consists only in the word of the parties concerned.

835 [114] [178] 591 592 428 [178] 586 586 178

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION. **Political organization.** The basic unit of political organization is the village, which is composed of one or more dominant local descent groups plus several others. Village government is by an assembly of all resident adult males, under the informal chairmanship of a headman elected by them from among their number. The membership of any immigrant household into a village is defined by the participation of the household's males in this assembly. Sustained membership in a village is voluntary. Khasi chiefdoms probably arose out of voluntary associations of villages, which occasionally transferred allegiance from one chief to another.

62 174 619

household deities, and measles and smallpox deities. 776
Deities of the first two categories are simply aspects 771
of the high God or Goddess. • The earth is peopled with two great orders of land demons and water demons who cause all undesirable, unnatural, and otherwise inexplicable events, acting either on their own or as instruments in the hands of sorcerers. Apart from omens, both in nature and in dreams, 787
Khasis attach supernatural significance also to mystic 822
numbers, and to the colors white, black, and red. They hold especially important folk beliefs regarding 824
betel nut, paddy rice, gold and silver, and clothing.
Practitioners. The two classes of religious practition- 791
ers are the village or state priests and the sacrificers. Both are male. They use the same divinatory tech- 793
niques of reading broken eggshells and the entrails 754
of cocks, and they both sacrifice cocks, hens, goats, pigs, and cattle. Their skills are not taught to them so much as picked up by observation and confirmed by demonstrations of efficacy. A priest is elected from among the men of his sib to direct his skills to the public good until he dies, and his rewards are institutionalized and come from the village or the state. A sacrificer acts for private persons or kin groups, on call, and is rewarded by them personally with gifts in cash or in kind. The sacrificer is called upon to explain and then to ritually remedy every variety of misfortune, especially illness, though his powers are nowadays regarded with ambivalence, and he is widely expected to become a sorcerer sooner or later. • There are two major types of sor- 754
cerer. One is the ritual specialist or sacrificer who secretly turns his skills from good to evil, manipulating demons to injure a person or kin group, and acting always for himself alone out of considerations of jealousy or revenge. The other is normally a leading citizen, a woman who is so wealthy and successful that it is believed that she must keep a *thlen*, i.e. a creature which will bring her prosperity as long as she feeds it periodically with human blood. To provide this blood, the men of her household, or other males whom she bewitches with a special whisky, will indiscriminately murder anyone except a mem- [184]
ber of her matrilineage. The Jaintias have an analogue to the *thlen* in their *taro*, except that the ultimate result is death from illness rather than murder. Minor witchcraft can be perpetrated by poison keepers or persons with an evil eye, who are often women. **Ceremonies.** The important traditional 843
ceremonies were the life-crisis rituals relating to 844
pregnancy and childbirth, the naming of a child, and 553
death. Lesser ceremonies related to marriage and 764
divorce, and to housebuilding. All these rituals were 585
addressed primarily to the ancestors, and they are 586 •
still performed in modified form by many Khasis. 342
Other rituals, which were performed by groups such 769
as villages, sibs, local descent groups, or households, 178
were addressed to the unnamed aspects of the high 782

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

strip of fine silk for the loins, a part of which hangs gracefully as low as the calves in front. No notice is here taken of what has undoubtedly been added and borrowed from their more civilised neighbours in the plains.

'MARRIAGE. — The marriageable age for females is from 15 to 18; for males, from 18 to 24. Matrimonial alliances are contracted either through the parents or the living representatives of the families to which the parties belong. The mode of procedure is still very primitive and unceremonious. The bridegroom, escorted by a number of friends and relatives, goes to the house of the bride, where all are feasted and lodged for the night; on the morrow he leads the bride, accompanied by a number of her relatives, to his own house, and entertains the company with dishes of boiled rice and fresh pork. After remaining there a day or two, the newly-married couple return together to the house of the wife, which becomes their future home. Marriage is dissoluble by regular divorce, for any sufficient cause, and often without any assignable reason except mutual dislike or want of issue, the latter being the most common case of all. Marriage with the Khásiás is simply a conventional arrangement, with nothing further for its object than the procreation of children; failing that, it is no longer looked upon as a contract permanently binding. Divorce is effected in the presence of eye-witnesses—the parents, or the heads of clans. Five cowries (*kauris*) are produced by the parties and exchanged, then cast away by mutual consent, and the ceremony is over. Parties once divorced can never again contract marriage with each other, but they are at liberty to marry into other families. Polygamy, strictly so called, is not sanctioned by Khási custom. Adultery is looked upon as a serious crime. If the five cowries have not been cast away by mutual consent, both husband and wife are held to be subject to the "matrimonial demon;" and even when either dies in wedlock, the survivor is not at liberty to contract a fresh alliance until he or she pays the family a sum of money as the means of removing the surviving party from subjection to the "matrimonial demon." The husband is a stranger, so to speak, in the family he has entered, and perpetuates the race of others, not his own. The children in all questions of lineage and personal rights follow the mother. There are always two interests in the same family—that of the husband, and that of the wife. Whatever the husband may have earned or acquired in